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UNCLAS PARIS 000431

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FROM USMISSION UNESCO PARIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: UNESCO AMBASSADORS ON POST WSIS SCENE

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Ambassador David A. Gross, U.S. Coordinator for International Communication and Information Policy and U.S. Ambassador to UNESCO Louise [1](#)V. Oliver met with a select group of UNESCO Ambassadors, including members of the Information for

All Programme Council, to exchange views on Internet Governance and WSIS outcomes at Ambassador Oliver's residence on January 19, 2006. In a discussion of what UNESCO's role might be, UNESCO Ambassadors expressed frustration at the low level of acceptance for UNESCO initiatives within the UN family and the difficulty of asserting UNESCO's core competencies within the UN system. With regard to WSIS, they also asked about the image of UNESCO at the Tunis Summit, the EU position on the process towards "enhanced cooperation", the Athens meeting of the Internet Governance Forum, and the disappointing treatment of journalists and NGO leaders by the Tunisian government in November 2005. The Belgian Ambassador to UNESCO, Philippe Kridelka, noted the importance of standard setting at UNESCO in order to "rein in globalization" and expressed hope that the UNESCO Director General would soon permit discussion of new instruments. A list of Ambassadors in attendance is included at the end of this cable.

UNESCO: FOREVER A WEAK LINK IN THE UN SYSTEM?

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Austrian Ambassador, Harald Wiesner noting his country's current EU Presidency, stated that whenever a hot issue emerges within the UN system, the UN in New York often assumes the lead, leaving UNESCO and others out of the picture. He then asked Ambassador Gross what his opinion was of overlapping jurisdictions in the UN system. The Czech Republic Ambassador Irena Moozova and Indian Ambassador Bhaswati Mukherjee also posed similar questions. The Czech Republic noted that UNESCO had responsibility for 8 WSIS action lines, but asked how labor would be divided since UNESCO shared these responsibilities with others. For example, the Czech Ambassador stated, UNESCO should have the lead in implementing the Education for All Programme but it often appeared to hesitate. India, referring to its long attempts to drag a WIPO debate on copyright issues into UNESCO, (The Rome Convention for the Protection of Performers, Producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting Organizations) stated flatly that certain mandates of UNESCO are poached upon by other UN organizations. Ambassador Jean Gueguinou of France pointed out that Secretary General Annan was near the end of his second term, and speculated that he would not be inclined to make hard decisions on turf battles pertaining to WSIS follow up, or otherwise. The Dutch Ambassador, Charlotte van Schaik-Zaaijer, bluntly stated that the real question was a lack of acceptance within the UN family for UNESCO-led initiatives.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Ambassador Gross acknowledged that there is a "contest" within the UN family for issues and then introduced the question of how the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) might take shape, noting that Canada supported Markus Kumar. In a nod to the Hungarian Ambassador in attendance, he cited Budapest's proposal on the table, and also mentioned past industry-driven initiatives to house the IGF in Paris.

[1](#)4. (SBU) In response to inquiries about other UN bodies poaching on UNESCO territory, Ambassador Gross clarified that with respect to WSIS, negotiators on the final document gave UN member states an important tool by being clear that they were not looking to any specific organization to expand its mandate and by clarifying which agencies had a role to play in each WSIS Action line. The Tunis agenda did not order anyone to do anything, he stated. He noted that the document also called on high-level negotiators to coordinate in order to avoid duplication among UN bodies. He reminded the group that working out core competencies and applying pressure to avoid duplication was ultimately up to member states, acknowledging that each member state has its own favorite member of the UN family. At the same time, he cautioned that UNESCO should be careful not to overreach and end up with even less than it wanted. (COMMENT: It appears that between the lines, UNESCO Ambassadors might have been suggesting that the United States put its trust back into UNESCO and defend its core mandates vis-a-vis other UN bodies. This step seems unlikely, given our

recent battles over cultural diversity. During our 20 year absence, many issues that might have been addressed at UNESCO were addressed elsewhere, perhaps to the dissatisfaction of some member states. END COMMENT.)

15. (SBU) Ambassador Zhang Xuezhong of China inquired about the image of UNESCO at Tunis, noting that he had heard that it had not been a very visible actor. Ambassador Gross responded that it was not, but that no specific member of the UN family was. WSIS, he stated, was very member state driven. The exception to this was the European Commission as a single actor representing its 25 members, he noted. The private sector also did not play a large role, he added, because WSIS was viewed as an intergovernmental negotiation process. He stated that it now was time for member states to focus on UNESCO's core competencies - education and the free flow of information - as UNESCO claimed its role. Ambassador Oliver suggested that UNESCO's role might encourage deeper cross-sectoral cooperation, especially with regard to ICTs and education.

EU: MESSAGE ON ENHANCED COOPERATION

16. (SBU) The Ambassador of the Netherlands to UNESCO asked how Gross' latest talks with the European Union proceeded. Ambassador Gross explained to the audience, which included 8 EU member states, that there were differences in how the term "enhanced cooperation", referring to the language of the Tunis Agenda adopted at WSIS, was interpreted. Some in the European Commission, he noted, saw this as a need for a new intergovernmental mechanism to address Internet governance issues. The U.S., he added, strongly disagreed and interpreted the language as referring to the use of existing organizations. Nobody wants to renegotiate the agreements from WSIS, he said, so it is time to look to existing organizations and their mandates. This was, he noted, a reason why UNESCO was so important.

INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM

17. The French Ambassador to UNESCO asked whether all questions raised at Tunis would be discussed at the first meeting of the IGF in Athens in the fall of 2006, or just the question of Internet governance. Ambassador Gross responded that once the forum's secretariat is established and a bureau is selected,

SIPDIS

then the multi-stakeholder bureau would set the agenda. He noted that there was a general sense that it would not be worthwhile to re-hash WSIS battles, and emphasized that the IGF was not a decision making or oversight body, but a place to exchange information.

REPRESSION IN TUNIS

18. Ambassador Hans Heinrich Wrede of Germany expressed concern at the Tunisian treatment of NGO activists and journalists during the WSIS summit, and regretted that media coverage of this overshadowed reporting on the event itself, especially in the European press. At the very least, many agreed, it had been useful to shine a light on the practices of the Tunisian government. However, the Ambassadors acknowledged that is a privilege for a country to host a UN event, and accordingly, basic principles of the UN, such as human rights, should be respected. Ambassador Gross noted that the U.S. had been outspoken on these issues at the Summit, including a statement during the plenary speech.

UNESCO: A STANDARD SETTER AGAIN?

19. (SBU) The Belgian Ambassador noted that his government shared in the success at WSIS. While ICANN was doing a good job, he said, a forum was needed to discuss views and identify social aspects and principles. The recent Convention on Cultural Diversity, he stated, showed that standard setting at UNESCO in order to "rein in globalization" was important. He expressed hope that the Director General would soon allow further work on standard setting and regretted his current call for a moratorium on new instruments. Ambassador Gross responded that he hoped it would be years before UNESCO even considered new instruments. (COMMENT: The subtext of the Belgian Ambassador's comments here suggests a view that the only way to get UNESCO to matter in the international system is through setting standards and creating new instruments. END COMMENT.) He then asked how UNESCO could link its mandate on education to WSIS, and expressed concern on whether UNESCO's Assistant

Director General for Education, Peter Smith (Amcit) would be able to reform the education sector.

¶10. (SBU) COMMENT: The discussion, intended to cover Internet Governance and WSIS implementation, revealed a surprising level of frustration among UNESCO Ambassadors with the organization's role and its reputation within the UN system. At the same time, the Ambassadors expressed hope that UNESCO could claim a role on education and media freedom in post-WSIS implementation. We observed that there were no questions on how UNESCO would follow up with the WSIS Action line on ethical dimensions of the information society, as Ambassadors appeared more focused on the IGF and the role of UNESCO in the UN system. Ambassador Gross's emphasis on a more activist role for member states in promoting the core competencies of UN bodies and better coordination within the UN family to avoid duplication was well received, and Mission looks forward to hosting more events for senior USG officials to demonstrate to our UNESCO audience that the USG is in listening mode and genuinely wants to exchange views on UNESCO issues. END COMMENT.

¶11. (SBU) The guest list is as follows:

Ambassador Harald Wiesner, Austria
Ambassador Philippe Kridelka, Belgium
Ambassador Jean Gueguinou, France
Ambassador Hector Gros Espiel, Uruguay
Mrs. Maria Clemencia Lopez-Jimenez, Venezuelan National Commission
Mr. Carlos Herrera, Charge d'Affaires, Peru
Ms. Linda Te Puni, New Zealand
Ambassador Yvon Charbonneau, Canada
Ambassador Hans Heinrich Wrede, Germany
Ambassador. Maria Wodzynska-Walicka, Poland
Ambassador Zhang Xuezhong, China
Ambassador Dr. Sharifah Maimunah Syed Zin, Malaysia
Ambassador Dr. Shadia Kenawy, Egypt
Ambassador Bhaswati Mukherjee, India
Ambassador Numan Hazar, Turkey
Ambassador Luiz Felipe de Macedo Soares, Brazil
Mrs. Jane Madden, Australian Deputy Chief of Mission to France
Ambassador Charlotte van Schaik-Zaaijer, Netherlands
Ambassador Andras Lakatos, Hungary
Ambassador Irena Moozva, Czech Republic